

**Assessment of Regional Office Implementation
of the Reactor Oversight Process
Independent Assessment Team Charter**

Background: The Reactor Oversight Process (ROP) was implemented in April 2000 to transition the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's (NRC) inspection and assessment of nuclear power plants to a more predictable and objective process. The ROP framework is maintained and implemented by the Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation (NRR), the Office of Nuclear Security and Incident Response (NSIR), and the four Regional Offices. To be an effective safety oversight program and to achieve the goal of a predictable and objective process, the ROP must be conducted by the regions consistently. The staff conducts an annual self-assessment of the ROP to identify areas for improvement related to reactor safety, process efficiency, and effectiveness in achieving the program goals. This independent assessment initiative will provide input to the annual ROP self-assessment.

Objective:

The assessment will be an independent review of the regional office implementation of the ROP to (1) identify areas for improvement in the ROP guidance to increase the program effectiveness or efficiency; (2) determine regional compliance with program requirements and enhance regional consistency; and (3) gain additional insights into licensee performance. The elements of the assessment discussed below should be focused on the implementation of the program across the region. In addition to these broad reviews conducted at the regional office, one plant site in the region will be selected to assess specific on-site inspection activities. To independently assess discrete licensee activities at the site, the staff plans to re-inspect several areas which were recently completed under the baseline inspection program. Based on the overall assessment, specific program improvements will be identified to enhance the oversight of licensee activities. Insights into licensee performance will also be assessed to ensure the ROP is adequately covering unique plant issues.

Scope:

The implementation assessment should address the following areas:

- a. Annual baseline inspection program completion, including inspection sample selection.
- b. Resource utilization consistent with ROP guidance and with each region's budget.
- c. Regional assessment of licensee performance including the determination of substantive cross-cutting issues.
- d. Independent assessment of inspection results.
- e. The determination of the significance of inspection findings.
- f. Inspector training and qualification.

- g. Completion of Temporary Instruction (TI) inspections.
- h. Site inspector staffing consistent with agency guidance.
- i. Licensee performance indicator (PI) program verification.
- j. Implementation of the Inspection Manual Chapter (IMC) 0350 process, if applicable.
- k. Conduct of supplemental inspections.
- l. Follow through on Executive Director for Operations (EDO) approved ROP deviations.
- m. Conduct of reactive inspections.
- n. Regional Management site visits per program guidance.
- o. Conduct of annual public meetings with licensees.

Expected Product and Schedule

The assessments will be carried out in each of the regional offices on an annual basis. The staff plans to perform the annual assessments after the plant end-of-cycle assessments are issued in March. The assessment will evaluate ROP implementation in the previous calendar year (CY) and will be captured in the following year's Commission Paper. For example, the assessments conducted in March-May 2007 will review CY2006 ROP implementation and be discussed in the March 2008 Commission Paper. The first assessment should be conducted for Region I and include Indian Point Units 2 and 3. Plant sites will be chosen based on discussions with the regions, but will not include plants that have a planned or have had completed an Operational Safety Review Team (OSART) inspection within five years.

The assessment team will document the results of the assessment in a memorandum to the Deputy Executive Director for Reactor and Preparedness Programs. At the completion of the assessment, the Deputy Executive Director for Reactor and Preparedness Programs will review the results with the NRR Office Director, NSIR Office Director, the Regional Administrator or the Deputy Regional Administrator in the Region assessed, and other Regional Administrators, as appropriate.

The independent assessment of discrete licensee activities will be accomplished by re-inspecting several areas which have been recently completed under the baseline inspection program. Observations from the inspections will also be included in the memorandum to the Deputy Executive Director for Reactor and Preparedness Programs.

NRR will describe in the annual ROP self-assessment the results of the independent assessments and discuss programmatic lessons learned and followup actions planned or taken.

Staffing

The assessment team will consist of four NRC staff members. Team members will be selected from NRR, NSIR, and regions other than the region being assessed, as appropriate. Regional staff should represent both the regional Division of Reactor Projects (DRP) and Division of Reactor Safety (DRS). The NRR representative will lead the first four assessments.

The independent assessment will total about 16 staff-weeks of effort per region. It will include visits to the regional office and selected plant site in the region. The assessment team may be split between the regional office and the selected plant site. The review at the regional office will be from a broad program perspective, and the review at the plant site will be site-specific. The staff expects the first assessment to require more effort due to initial implementation and the increased focus on Indian Point.

Assessment Guidance

NRR will develop written guidance to carry out the implementation assessment. The format used for operator licensing assessments will be considered as a starting point for this program. The assessment will be a sampling process that will look at a variety of ROP activities. The implementation assessment will complement other existing assessment activities and be included as part of IMC 0307, "Reactor Oversight Process Self-Assessment Program." For example, IMC 0307 already requires assessments of regional inspection reports, therefore that activity will not be duplicated by the implementation assessment.

Because a large portion of the assessment will consider documentation that is an agency record in ADAMS or in the inspection database (reactor programs system - RPS), the assessment guidance should describe those assessment activities that can be completed by the assessment team prior to traveling to the regional office or the plant site.